

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA
BECKLEY DIVISION**

MIACHEL H. HICKS,

Plaintiff,

v.

HILDA SALIS, *et al.*,

Defendants.

)
)
)
)
)
)
)
)

Civil Action No. 5:10-1404

PROPOSED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

On December 23, 2010, Plaintiff, acting *pro se*,¹ filed his Complaint in this matter claiming entitlement to relief pursuant to the Civil Rights Act. (Document No. 1.) Plaintiff names the following as defendants: (1) Hilda Salis, Secretary of Labor, and (2) Robert Hardman, District Manager. (*Id.*, p. 4.) Plaintiff appears to assert that Defendants engaged in age discrimination and retaliation. (*Id.*, pp. 4 -5, and 8.) Plaintiff explains that Mr. Harman engaged in age discrimination when he “passed three Special Investigator vacancies” to younger applicants. (*Id.*) Specifically, Plaintiff states that “Mr. Hardman made a selection to three younger employees, younger in age and years of service, for a Special Investigator vacancy that I had been requesting since 2001.” (*Id.*) Plaintiff acknowledges that “Mr. Hardman said the deciding factor in the selection of the candidate for the position was that the Selectee’s writing skills were better than Inspector Hicks.” (*Id.*) Finally, Plaintiff contends that his performance rating dropped after he filed his EEO Complaint. (*Id.*) Plaintiff, therefore, requests monetary and injunctive relief.² (*Id.*, pp. 5 - 6.)

¹ Because Petitioner is acting *pro se*, the documents which he has filed are held to a less stringent standard than if they were prepared by a lawyer and therefore construed liberally. *See Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21, 92 S.Ct. 594, 30 L.Ed.2d 652 (1972).

² The Court notes that Plaintiff paid his filing fee and the Clerk of the Court issued Summons upon Defendants. (Document Nos. 1 and 3.)

ANALYSIS

Pursuant to Rule 41(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 41.1 of the Local Rules of Civil Procedure for the Southern District of West Virginia, District Courts possess the inherent power to dismiss an action for a *pro se* Plaintiff's failure to prosecute *sua sponte*.³ See Link v. Wabash Railroad Co., 370 U.S. 626, 629, 82 S.Ct. 1386, 1388, 8 L.Ed.2d 734 (1962).

Rule 41.1 of the Local Rules provides:

Dismissal of Actions. When it appears in any pending civil action that the principal issues have been adjudicated or have become moot, or that the parties have shown no interest in further prosecution, the judicial officer may give notice to all counsel and unrepresented parties that the action will be dismissed 30 days after the date of the notice unless good cause for its retention on the docket is shown. In the absence of good cause shown within that period of time, the judicial officer may dismiss the action. The clerk shall transmit a copy of any order of dismissal to all counsel and unrepresented parties. This rule does not modify or affect provisions for dismissal of actions under FR Civ P 41 or any other authority.

Although the propriety of a dismissal "depends on the particular circumstances of the case," in determining whether to dismiss a case involuntarily for want of prosecution, the District Court should consider the following four factors:

- (i) the degree of personal responsibility of the plaintiff;
- (ii) the amount of prejudice caused the defendant,
- (iii) the existence of a history of deliberately proceeding in a dilatory fashion, and
- (iv) the existence of a sanction less drastic than dismissal.

Ballard v. Carlson, 882 F.2d 93, 95 (4th Cir. 1989). In consideration of the first three factors, the

³ Rule 41(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provides:

(b) Involuntary Dismissal: Effect. If the plaintiff fails to prosecute or to comply with these rules or any order of court, a defendant may move to dismiss the action or any claim against it. Unless the dismissal order states otherwise, a dismissal under this subdivision (b) and any dismissal not under this rule - - except one for lack of jurisdiction, improper venue, or failure to join a party under Rule 19 - - operates as an adjudication on the merits.

Court finds that the delays in this case are attributable solely to the Plaintiff. Based upon a review of the docket sheet, Summonses were issued nearly one year ago (Document No. 3), and Plaintiff has not accomplished service of process upon Hilda Salis or Robert Hardman.⁴ Plaintiff, therefore, is the sole cause of the delays in this action. With respect to the second and third factors, although the record is void of further evidence indicating that Plaintiff has a history of “deliberately proceeding in a dilatory fashion,” the Court does not find that the named Defendants will be prejudiced by dismissal of Plaintiff’s Complaint.

In consideration of the fourth factor, the Court acknowledges that a dismissal under either Rule 41(b) or Local Rule 41.1 is a severe sanction against Plaintiff that should not be invoked lightly. The particular circumstances of this case, however, do not warrant a lesser sanction. An assessment of fines, costs, or damages against Plaintiff would be unjust in view of Plaintiff’s status as a *pro se* litigant. Accordingly, the undersigned has determined that this action should be dismissed without prejudice unless Plaintiff is able to show good cause for his failure to prosecute.

PROPOSAL AND RECOMMENDATION

The undersigned therefore hereby respectfully **PROPOSES** that the District Court confirm and accept the foregoing findings and **RECOMMENDS** that the District Court **DISMISS** this case without prejudice for failure to prosecute and remove this matter from the Court’s docket.

The Plaintiff is hereby notified that this “Proposed Findings and Recommendation” is hereby **FILED**, and a copy will be submitted to the Honorable United States District Judge Irene C. Berger. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 28, United States Code, Section 636(b)(1)(B), and Rule 6(e) and

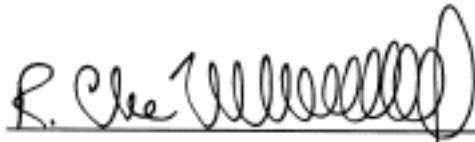
⁴ Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(m) provides that “[i]f a defendant is not served within 120 days after the complaint is filed, the court - - on motion or on its own after notice to the plaintiff - - must dismiss the action without prejudice against that defendant . . .”

72(b), Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, the Plaintiff shall have seventeen days (fourteen days, filing of objections and three days, mailing/service) from the date of filing of this Findings and Recommendation within which to file with the Clerk of this Court specific written objections identifying the portions of the Findings and Recommendation to which objection is made and the basis of such objection. Extension of this time period may be granted for good cause.

Failure to file written objections as set forth above shall constitute a waiver of *de novo* review by the District Court and a waiver of appellate review by the Circuit Court of Appeals. Snyder v. Ridenour, 889 F.2d 1363, 1366 (4th Cir. 1989); Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140, 155 (1985); Wright v. Collins, 766 F.2d 841, 846 (4th Cir. 1985); United States v. Schronce, 727 F.2d 91, 94 (4th Cir. 1984). Copies of such objections shall be served on opposing parties, District Judge Berger and this Magistrate Judge.

The Clerk of this Court is directed to file this “Proposed Findings and Recommendation” and to mail a copy of the same to Plaintiff, who is acting *pro se*.

Date: December 20, 2011.


R. Clarke VanDervort
United States Magistrate Judge